

# Monument Valley

## Desert offers haunting vistas, the eerie sound of silence

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The towering red and orange sandstone buttes are astounding. The Anasazi petroglyphs are haunting. And the views of Navajo culture and lifestyle are a gift. But what may be the greatest wonder of a visit to Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park is the silence.

No road noise, no cabs honking, no leaf blowers or lawnmowers, just overwhelming quiet. The sound of the breeze blowing the sandy soil or the pounding of one's own heart is crisp and clear and clean.

Located in northeastern Arizona and southeastern Utah, Monument Valley's sandstone and shale mesas and buttes, spires and canyons and sand dunes cover 29,816 strikingly beautiful acres of the Navajo Indian Reservation.

The towering monoliths

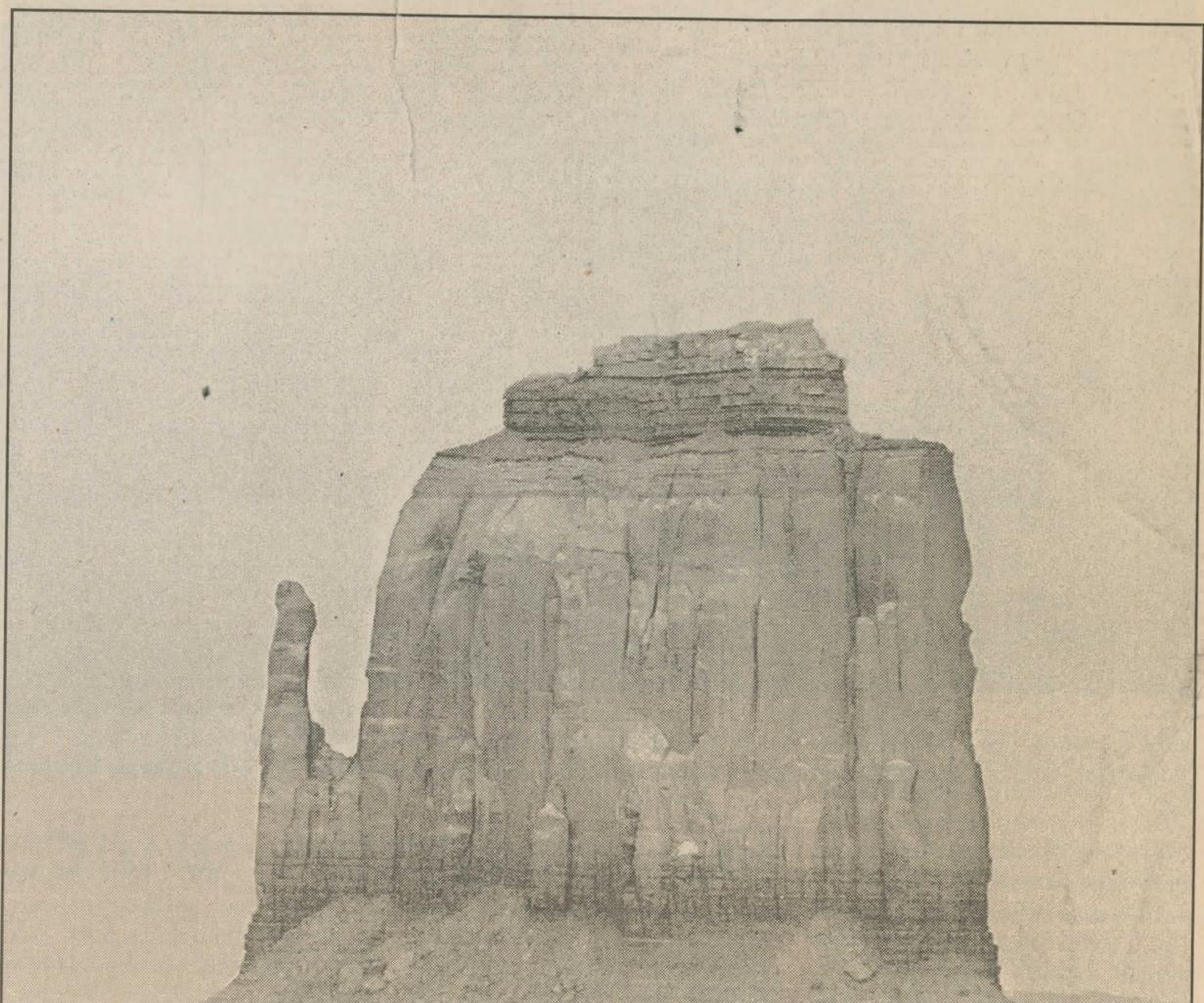
### If you go

#### GETTING THERE:

Monument Valley, which straddles the northeastern Arizona and southeastern Utah borders, is a long trip from anywhere, but well worth the drive. With the towering monoliths rising from the desert, the trip's final miles along scenic Highway 163 offer a beautiful prelude to the spectacular scenery yet to come.

Monument Valley lies 170 miles northeast of Flagstaff, Ariz. America West Airlines flies into the Flagstaff Pulliam Airport, and about a dozen car rental agencies have desks at the terminal. Phoenix is just over 300 miles south and its airport is a hub for America West Airlines.

The park is 160 miles east





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various points along the self-guided tour selling beautiful and reasonably priced hand-crafted jewelry. The handiwork is exquisite and the prices are a bargain compared to jewelry found in local retail stores. Pictures of the locals are discouraged, but may be attained for a small fee. It's important to remember the park still is home to many of the Navajo.

In the small and dusty town of Kayenta, 24 miles south, there are two hotels, the Holiday Inn and the Wetherhill Inn, a Best Western Hotel. But there's hardly a better place to stay than Gouldings Trading Post and Lodge, adjacent to the entrance to Monument Valley.

In operation since the 1920s, its 64 rooms are nestled into the side of a towering butte and all have balconies looking out over the valley. John Wayne even had his own cabin here.

Gouldings offers a small museum and gift shop, an indoor pool, a celebratory film of Monument Valley, a car wash for your inevitably dusty vehicle, and, at the front desk, a selection of Hollywood movies filmed at the park.

Tiered, with windows overlooking the park, the charming Stage Coach Restaurant offers

a menu ranging from steak and seafood to pasta and burgers. It also features the curious "peanut butter cobbettes" which are described as "a unique flavor for the customer with the exploratory palate."

For those not as exploratory, try the traditional and delicious Navajo taco.

Alcohol is prohibited anywhere on the Navajo Reservation.

Kayenta offers several restaurants, including the Golden Sands Café, which is fashioned after an Old West saloon, and the locally popular Amigos, which serves Navajo, Mexican, and American fare.

Monument Valley is also a welcoming destination for campers. Adjoining the Visitors Center is a 100-site campground, and Gouldings has its own campground just west of the lodge.

Easy to miss, but worth the drive, is the Oljeto Trading Post. Part museum, part trading post, and a throw-back to the 1920's, the site is only 11 miles northwest of Gouldings and is a popular place to buy Navajo handicrafts.

Monument Valley is open year-round, but is most popular from April through October.

The Navajo close the park and enjoy the silence on their own on Christmas Day and for a half-day at Thanksgiving.